

Travel

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## Vast Morgan museum is manageable

### Glorious architecture, extensive collections make this worth a visit

By Bonnie Friedman  
Special to The Advertiser

**Where:** The Morgan Library & Museum, New York City.

**What:** Many of New York's museums are immense and can be overwhelming to residents, let alone to visitors. Best to start small.

The Morgan Library & Museum is both magnificent and manageable. Until 2006, the campus was comprised of three historic buildings. The original 1906 library was constructed to hold the art and manuscript collections amassed by American financier J. Pierpont Morgan. It was opened to the public in 1924 by J.P. Morgan Jr. as a tribute to his father. When the collections outgrew the building, an annex was added in 1928.

The Morgan family home — one of New York's few remaining freestanding brownstones — was built in 1852, purchased by Morgan in 1904 (the family lived there until 1943) and finally purchased by the museum in 1988. A major renovation and expansion, which more than doubled the exhibition space, took three years and was completed in 2006.

The Renzo Piano Project, named for the 1998 Pritzker Prize-winning Italian architect who designed it, unifies the campus with modestly scaled steel and glass pavilions. The soaring central atrium evokes the spirit of an Italian piazza. Also included are the Morgans' first performance hall, a state-of-the-art storage vault, two new dining facilities, and an expanded shop.

**Other features:** While the architecture alone is worth a visit, the collections are glorious — music manuscripts, literary and historical manuscripts, medieval and Renaissance manuscripts, and drawings and prints from the 14th to the 20th centuries. There are always at least two special exhibitions. On recent view were charming original illustrations from the "Babar the Elephant" book series and the only surviving manuscript of the first book of John Milton's "Paradise Lost."

**If you go:** [www.themorgan.org](http://www.themorgan.org) includes the special exhibits calendar. And when you're culturally sated, turn right when you leave the museum to stroll up one of New York's most fashionable streets, Madison Avenue. Or turn left, walk two blocks south and then two blocks west to the world's largest store, Macy's Herald Square.



The Morgan Library & Museum is home to music and literary manuscripts, plus drawings from the 14th to 20th centuries.

Courtesy of The Morgan Library & Museum